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PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY
ASBESTOS DUMP SITE
MILLINGTON, NEW JERSEY
POSSAIC TOWNSHIP HALL

AUGUST 20, 1986

Introduction

This summary describes a public meeting held at the Possaic Township Hall on August 20, 1986. The purpose of the meeting was to explain the nature of the site and the scope of remedial activities that will take place as outlined in the remedial investigation and feasibility study (RI/FS) work plan. The meeting was held expressly for the presentation of the work plan and was not included as part of the regular town council meeting.

Site History

The Asbestos Dump Site consists of one main site location and 3 other satellite areas, all within a 4-mile radius of the unincorporated town of Millington in Possaic Township, New Jersey. Asbestos shingles and roofing materials were manufactured by National Gypsum Company from 1953 to 1975 and disposed on an 11-acre tract of land along Division Street, which borders the Possaic River. Phenol mercuric acetate, a paint solvent, was also disposed at this site. Other sites used solely for asbestos-contaminated waste disposal included a landfill which lies along a hiking trail in the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge and two privately owned properties located on 257 New Vernon Road and 651 White Bridge Road.

Operations began at the asbestos-shingle manufacturing plant, located in Millington, in 1927 and continued under several ownerships until 1975, when the plant closed permanently. Throughout a substantial part of its operating life, waste process water and some other materials from the plant were discarded on plant property near the Possaic River.

Specific areas which comprise the site were not identified until 1980. At that time, a former employee of one of the owners identified the three other areas that received solid waste asbestos material from the manufacturing plant. It is believed that discarded asbestos shingles were used as fill materials in these three areas.

The Millington area of the Asbestos Dump Site is within an industrial complex. The Great Swamp area is open to the public as a hiking and nature area. The other two areas privately owned.

Public Meeting Overview

Lillian Johnson, Superfund Community Relations Coordinator for EPA Region II, opened the meeting shortly after 8:00 p.m. After a brief explanation of the purpose of the meeting, Ms. Johnson introduced the persons who were in attendance for discussion concerning the Asbestos Dump Site:

- Raymond Basso -- Chief, New Jersey Investigation and Compliance Section, EPA
- Kevin Psarianos -- Project Manager, Asbestos Dump Site, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP)
- Thomas Morahan -- Project Manager, Asbestos Dump Site, Fred C. Hart and Associates (Consultant to National Gypsum Company)
- Anthony Hoppa -- Community Relations Specialist, NUS Corporation (Consultant to the EPA)

After Ms. Johnson's introductory remarks, Mr. Basso provided a brief overview of the EPA's Superfund Enforcement process for remediation of hazardous waste sites in which the potentially responsible parties have been identified. The roles and responsibilities of the EPA, the National Gypsum Company, and the technical consultants for each were outlined and explained. Mr. Basso also highlighted the site, and subsequently, the enforcement history. He explained the purpose of the remedial investigation and the field activities that will be conducted during the study, including sampling procedures and locations. The purpose of the feasibility study was outlined and tentative project schedules and completion dates were discussed. At the conclusion of Mr. Basso's presentation, questions were received from those in attendance. Approximately 25 people attended this meeting.

The entire presentation, including questions and answers, lasted 1-1/2 hours. Mr. Basso answered most of the questions related to administrative and technical concerns, with assistance from Mr. Morahan and Mr. Psarianos on certain questions.

Fact sheets explaining the Superfund program and the public participation process were made available at the meeting room entrance. A sign-in sheet was also circulated so that interested citizens could be placed on the Asbestos Dump Site mailing list.

Primary Areas of Questioning

Nature and Extent of Contamination

Several questions were asked regarding the extent of the contamination, such as the discovery of the satellite sites--specifically, how the locations were determined; the record-keeping of National Gypsum's disposal practices; the possibility of additional sites containing paint solvents; and the Hazard Ranking Score for the site.

Mr. Basso and Mr. Psarianos explained that the satellite sites were located via aerial photographs and through informational interviews with people knowledgeable about the manufacturing operations of National Gypsum. Mr. Basso then explained the process by which sites become listed on the National Priorities List. Mr. Basso also explained that information request letters had been sent to National Gypsum in order to obtain more information on the company's disposal practices; however, he could not provide the details of the company's response to those letters but agreed to obtain the information and send it to the citizen who had questioned him. Mr. Basso stated that the EPA does not believe that paint solvents were disposed at the other sites. Also, he explained that while the exact score was not known, the site did score higher than 28.5 on the Hazard Ranking System to be included on the National Priorities List.

Administrative Concerns

Questions were asked about the cost of the remedial investigation; the relationship between the EPA and the NJDEP; the role of National Gypsum after the study is completed; and the remedial alternative screening criteria under the feasibility study, with specific reference to cost as a screening factor.

Mr. Morahan answered for Mr. Basso in regard to the cost question by explaining that National Gypsum would pay approximately \$500,000 for the remedial investigation. Mr. Basso clarified the relationship between the EPA and the NJDEP, stating that although the EPA is the lead government agency, the NJDEP supplies them with their expertise and comments on all work plans and submittals by Fred C. Hart and Associates. He continued to explain that the NJDEP has review capacity and that all documents are submitted to the state for comment before being finalized. The role of National Gypsum after completion of the study was discussed by Mr. Basso, who, at this point, presented an overview of the enforcement process again. The screening criteria for remedial alternatives was highlighted, and Mr. Basso explained the concept of fund balancing--the EPA's method of distributing Superfund monies--and the variations of this policy for sites where the potentially responsible party has been identified.

Remedial Investigation Field Activities

Several questions were raised concerning the goal of the investigation and what type of information the EPA hopes to obtain; the use of groundwater monitoring wells; and the equipment and personnel that will be involved with onsite field activities.

Mr. Basso explained that the purpose of the RI is to collect data so as to better define and understand the problem. The purpose of the groundwater monitoring wells and the nature of the geology around the site vicinity was also discussed. Mr. Morahan highlighted the field activities that will take place and discussed the equipment that will be used during drilling operations and the people who will be working on site during these operations. Drilling schedules and locations were also given.

Health Concerns

One question was raised concerning possible health effects from ingestion of well water that may be found to be contaminated with asbestos materials. Also, one citizen objected to the terminology used during the evening's discussion; she felt that gypsum, not asbestos, should be used to describe the contamination, as it is not pure asbestos that has been disposed at the sites, but rather, materials containing gypsum. She felt that the use of the word "asbestos" was creating an unnecessary fear.

Mr. Basso could not provide any information regarding the toxicity of asbestos but offered to send information to the individual after conferring with a employee of the Center for Disease Control. He did acknowledge that asbestos is more readily associated as an air problem, with health effects resulting from breathing asbestos fibers. Mr. Morahan and Mr. Basso also explained that a risk assessment would be conducted during the feasibility study to evaluate and measure the toxicity of asbestos and the threat to public health. It was reiterated that in order to arrive at any conclusions, data from the remedial investigation must first be collected and analyzed.

Public Participation Concerns

Questions were raised regarding the availability of information and also the procedures that would be followed if citizens volunteered information regarding other disposal areas.

Mr. Basso stated that all information that is not enforcement sensitive or confidential is available to the public. He also explained that while the EPA would follow up on any information regarding additional disposal areas, it would have to be determined at a later date whether the investigation of those sites would be included as part of this site's investigation or as a separate project.

Brief Analysis of the Meeting

EPA personnel were prepared for this meeting and answered questions in a clear manner. They were available after the meeting to discuss remaining concerns with the residents.